

4555 a  
A  
CIRCUMSTANTIAL ACCOUNT

OF THE DEATH OF

Abbé LAWRENCE RICCI, K

L A T E

GENERAL of the Society of JESUS.

To which is annexed

A COPY of the PROTESTATION which he left  
at his DEATH.



L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year of our Lord 1776.

47  
3 / 13  
538.





*An Account of the Circumstances  
relating to the Death of the Abbé*  
**LAWRENCE RICCI.**

S I R,



T is not my Design to  
make any Reflections on  
the Event which is the  
Subject of this Letter :  
The circumstantial Account which I  
send you, is taken out of some Letters  
from *Rome*, written by Persons worthy  
of Credit, and Witnesses of the Facts.

**LAWRENCE RICCI**, was born  
at *Florence*, the 2d of *August*, 1703, of

an illustrious Family : He entered into the Society of *Jesus* in the Year 1720. and was made General of it on the 21st of *May*, 1758. After the Destruction of the Society, he was sent Prisoner to the Castle of *St. Angelo*, on the 22d of *September*, 1773, where Death put an End to his suffering Life.

His last Illness was but of a few Days : The eighth was the last of Pain and Life. Loaded with a Weight of Years, rendered more weighty by many heavy Crosses, and by a variety and long Series of Afflictions ; with accumulated woe on the latter Period of them, by the Suppression of his Order ; by the calumnies cast on it and himself ; by the Imprisonment of his own Person, and a long, painful, and close Confinement, especially for the first eighteen Months of it ;—Under this complication of Years and Sorrows, he was little able to support a violent Attack of an inflammatory Fever. The Relief and Succours which his Holiness  
 vouch-



vouchsafed to afford him in his sick State, by giving in Charge to his own Physician, Doctor *Sallicetti*, to leave no Endeavours untried for his Recovery, were without effect. Bleeding was repeated to the fourth Time, and Blisters were applied, but it soon appeared that all Means to save his Life were unavailing.

The first Symptoms of his Disease discovered themselves on *Thursday* Evening, *November 16*. After having taken his Walk, according to his Custom, on the Terras of the Castle, on his Return to his Apartment he was seized with a Chilness and a Cold, which immediately became very violent. The Fever soon redoubled upon him, and by *Saturday* Evening his Life was judged to be in Danger.

The sick Man, sensible of his own dangerous Situation, demanded the holy *Viaticum*: Accordingly he obtained this

Consolation on *Sunday* Morning, in Presence of the Sub-Governor and the two Chaplains of the Castle, of the Lay-Brother who waited on him, of a Sergeant, a Corporal, and other Soldiers with lighted Flambeaux.

When the Blessed Sacrament was brought, he entered into profound Recollection, and remained silent for some time; then judging he ought not to be wanting to himself, by a solemn Declaration of his own Innocence, and that of his Order, which he had governed for the Space of fifteen Years, he began to speak as follows :——“ That he sincerely pardoned all those who had been instrumental in the Destruction of the Society :—He did not omit to pray particularly for those who had reduced him to this State of Inability and Sufferings, and to implore the Blessing of Heaven on them : After which, raising his Voice, and with a remarkable firm Tone, he said, “ that

in

in the Presence of God, whom he adored in his august Sacrament, and by whom shortly he was going to be judged, he declared to the whole World, that he was entirely innocent of all that had been laid to his Charge, and of whatever might have contributed to the Destruction of the Society, entrusted to his Care, or to his own personal Imprisonment. He thanked God for withdrawing him from this World, and hoped that his Death would procure some Alleviation to those, who suffered with him in the same Cause.

All those who were present, not excepting even the guards, could not refrain from weeping; and the Priest, who was performing the service, was so moved, that he dropped the sacred Host on the Patten, without being sensible of what had happened.

After the sick Man had received the holy *Viaticum*, the Fever redoubled more  
A4 violently

violently on him, and denounced his approaching end. On Monday evening the Sacrament of Extreme Unction was administered to him, and he received it with redoubled fervour, and with the greatest edification. He then caused a request to be presented to the Pope, craving his Apostolical Benediction, if his Holiness did not think him unworthy of it: The Pope was graciously pleased to grant his petition, and accompanied the grant with the most tender and paternal expressions.

Many Cardinals sent frequent messages of enquiry after his health, and an unknown person caused two flambeaux of a very large size to burn before the Shrine of St. *Ignatius*.

Yet the sick Party grew worse and worse, and nothing remained but his constancy in sufferings: His patience did not forsake him in his last illness, which  
had



had supported him during the long period of his imprisonment. Not a breath of complaint was heard on his death-bed, as not a word of murmur had escaped his lips in his prison, even against the authors of his hard and sad lot; nor the least shadow was seen of resentment against those under-officers of the Castle, who had misbehaved towards him. Submissively resigned to the will of his Creator in all events, he waited with confidence the hour of his releasement: He caused certain fervent prayers to be read by his bed-side, of which he had made a select Collection during his abode in the Castle, with the intention of making use of them at his death, which he foresaw was not far distant.

It was remarked, that during this interval even to the moment he gave up the ghost, he was always present to himself, and in full enjoyment of his senses. An hour before his death, he spoke familiarly

liarly and with his usual serenity to the person who attended him in his sickness, to whom he gave the last farewell, saying to him, that he should hear his voice no more.

From that instant he spoke no more. He composed himself in calm recollection, and in short, on the 24th of *November*, a little after noon, at a time when all opposition to his enlargement seemed to be removed, he sweetly gave up his soul to his Redeemer at the age of seventy-two years, three months, and twenty-two days, having lived fifty-five years, three months, and six days in Religion. It had been his request, that the Crucifix, which he always carried about him, should be delivered to his Nephew; that his little Wardrobe should be distributed, by way of some small recompence to those who had served him; and that he should be  
buried

buried at the late professed House of the Jesuits.

All those who were present at the death of this late and last General of the Society of Jesus, (indeed we may say, all *Rome*, as they were not ignorant of the circumstances) and even to the Galley Slaves of the Castle, all conceived the greatest veneration for his memory, and all look on his death as precious in the sight of God. Dr. *Sallicetti* declared openly, that he had been present at the deaths of many persons in repute for piety and virtue, but that in his life he had never been witness to such sentiments as those he had just been present at.

The Pope gave orders to Cardinal *Corfini* for the Funeral of Abbé *Ricci*; and the will of his Holiness was, that all should be done according to the quality of the subject, and that his body should be deposited in the vault of the church of

the *Jesu*, near the other Generals of the Society his predecessors.

Accordingly the national church of *Florence* was hung with black, and on Saturday *November* the 25th, two hours after sunset, the corpse was conveyed in a coach attended by four flambeaux, and followed by another coach, to the said Church, where on the morrow morning, vested in his sacerdotal habits, he was exposed on a lofty Bed of State, round which were burning thirty grand Tapers.

During this whole morning, which was Sunday *November* 26th, there was an extraordinary concourse of people to this church, of all sorts and conditions. Mass was continued to be said at all the Altars till noon. The funeral service was celebrated with great decency and solemnity, by the Clergy who serve that parish. The throng of people did not discontinue, and many gave tokens of great veneration and tender



tender affection, though curiosity perhaps was the chief motive that first led them thither.

I must not pass over in silence one remarkable token of respect given by the Bishop of *Commachio*. This worthy Prelate, who is in equal repute for piety and learning, the same who had lately entered *Rome* barefoot at the head of many of his Clergy, came also to the *Florentine* church, and placing himself on his knees near the *Catafalque*, he said, with a voice loud enough to be heard by many, that he did not come to pray for the soul of the deceased, but to solicit the credit of that singularly just man, whom he regarded as a predestinated Soul, and as a Martyr. Many others seemed to think the same, without daring to declare their sentiments so openly. In citing this passage, I have nothing in view but to shew the high esteem his virtue was held in, and the homage paid to it.

- At

At mid-day the church was shut, and the corpse withdrawn from the sight of the people. It was removed into the Sacristy, where no one was allowed to enter. Towards midnight it was put into the same coach as had brought it thither, followed also by the second, and conveyed with lighted torches to the church of the *Jesu*, where all was ready for the burial, according to the Pope's orders, and the request of the venerable old man. The President of the House said the Prayers of the church over the corpse, before it was let down into the vault. The body was then put into a coffin, which was placed on the side of his predecessors *Centurioni* and *Visconti*, in quality of General of the Society of Jesus. To serve by way of Epitaph, a scroll of parchment was fixed to the Coffin, on which was written his name, his age, the time and place of his death, and the number of years he had been General of his Order.

Such

Such was the end of the eighteenth and last General of the Society of Jesus. His last act and deed left in writing, which he thought incumbent on him to consign to posterity in attestation of his innocence, will perhaps be the only monument that will remain of his memory. He had prepared beforehand, and at his leisure this protestation, to the end that if his last sickness should not allow him to speak it, he might at least, to the best of his power, make known to all the world, his personal innocence, as well as that of the Religious Order he had governed for fifteen years. Attentive to fulfil this obligation, which he judged important, he had the precaution to write himself this declaration, and to sign it with his own hand; and in pursuance of this design, he entrusted it to one of the soldiers of the Castle, on whose fidelity he thought he could best rely, and who in effect discharged his trust faithfully.

This

This authentic piece is preserved with great care, and from this original is drawn the Italian copy, from whence are taken the French and English translations.

It seems impossible to call in question the authenticity of this piece; for the characters and signature of his hand cannot but be known, and they may be confronted with many of his letters, some of which no doubt are still in being.





*An authentic Copy of the Protestation  
which Abbé Lawrence Ricci left at  
his death.*

**T**HE uncertainty of the time when it will please Almighty God to call me to himself, and the certainty that this time is not far distant; considering my advanced age, the multitude, the long duration, and weight of my sufferings, warn me to be beforehand in the discharge of every duty I think incumbent on me;—and this precaution is the more necessary, as it may easily happen that my last sickness may disable me from doing it at the time of my death.

There-

Therefore considering myself as at this instant going to appear before the Tribunal of infallible truth and justice, such as is the sole tribunal of God ;—after long and mature reflection ; and after having humbly prayed to my most merciful Redeemer and awful Judge, not to permit me, especially in this my last act and deed of my life, to be led away, or influenced by passion, or by any bitterness of heart or mind, or by any other vicious end or motive ;—but purely because I judge it my duty to render justice to truth and innocence—I make the two following Declarations and Protestations :—

First, I declare and protest that the Society of Jesus, now extinct, has not given any cause for its own suppression : This I declare and protest with that moral certainty, which a Superior can  
have,

have, who is well informed of what passes in his Order.

Secondly, I declare and protest, that I have not given the least occasion towards my own imprisonment : This I declare and protest with that great certainty and evidence, which each one has in the consciousness of his own actions. My only motive for making this second protestation is, because I judge it necessary for the credit of the Society of Jesus now extinct, of which I was General.

But my intention is not, that in consequence of these two Protestations, any of those should be judged guilty in the sight of God, who have brought these disasters on the Society and myself : I shall religiously abstain from passing any such-like judgments. The views of the mind of man, and the affections of his heart, are known by God. He alone  
sees

fees the errors of the human understanding, and discerns how far they are excusable. He alone penetrates the views which set man on action, and the spirit with which he acts; — the affections and inclinations of the heart which accompany the action, — and from whence depends the rectitude or culpability of the exterior action; consequently I leave all judgment to him, *who will examine the works of men, and search out their thoughts* (Book of wisdom, ch. vi. ver. 4.

And not to be wanting to my duty as a Christian, I protest that with the divine assistance, I have always pardoned, and that I do now sincerely pardon, all those who have persecuted me, first by their persecution of the Society of Jesus, and the many hardships they caused individuals, my late subjects, to undergo — then by the suppression and extinction



tion of it — and by what soon followed my imprisonment, with all the sufferings that have attended it, and by the injuries done to my reputation: — these are known facts, and notorious to the whole world. I pray the Lord, out of his pure bounty and goodness, and out of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ his Son, first to pardon my own innumerable sins; and next to pardon the authors and instruments of those losses which I have sustained, and those sufferings I have undergone, in conjunction with the whole body of which I was head — and I desire to die with this prayer and these sentiments in my heart.

Lastly, I pray and intreat all those into whose hands this my Declaration and Protestation may fall, that they will make it public to the world, as much as may be: I crave the performance of this my last request by all the claims of human  
bene-

benevolence, of justice, and of Christian charity ; and a claim grounded on such titles cannot but be persuasive to every one to comply with this my earnest will and desire.

Signed *Lawrence Ricci*, in his own hand.

This is the same Declaration and Protestation which Abbé *Lawrence Ricci* late General of the Society of Jesus, repeated and confirmed on the 19th of *November* at the time he was going to receive the holy *Viaticum*, before Jesus Christ himself in the Blessed Sacrament, and in the presence of the Vice Governor of the Castle of *St. Angelo*, his Secretary *Don Giovanni*, Abbé *Orlandi*, of a Serjeant, a Corporal, the Apothecary, the Domestics of the Governor *Camillo* and *Pietruccio*, nine Soldiers, and Galley Slaves, all whose names we could mention ; these accompanied the Blessed Sacrament into the chamber where Abbé *Ricci* lay dangerously ill, but in his  
perfect

perfect senses, and persisting in the same sentiments.

Whoever reads the above Declaration without prejudice or passion, cannot but discover, with convincing evidence, the characters of innocence, the language of sincerity, the confidence and security of an upright conscience, with all the moderation enjoined by the Christian religion.

I have the honour to be, &c.

